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SHOW ME THE MAN

VAUDEVILLE PLAYLET

—— by ——

CLARA ELEANOR WAGNER

Author of "Cupid in Hell"

"The real dramas of life are not in circumstances but in feelings."

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VAUDEVILLE PLAYLET

"Show Me the Man"

—BY—

CLARA ELEANOR WAGNER

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Jane Dickens, a village woman.
(A man impersonates Jane.)

Violette Glenn, city girl.

Italian, street piano player.

SCENE — Hollyhock Place. Time, noon. The kitchen in the Dickens house. The noon sunlight streams through a window on the left. On the other side of the room a table, with a chair near. On the table are tin pans. One is filled with potatoes. A knife near. A bucket of water on table. A dipper with long handle, in bucket. Paper flowers are placed about the room. At back, a door opens into street. Two wooden rockers in center of room.

The elderly Jane Dickens, dissatisfied, sits in rocker. The rocker moves fast and slow, seemingly with her thoughts. She is dressed in very large black and white check shirt-waist suit, with plain black border four inches wide around bottom of skirt. Deep collar and cuffs of black, and white apron.

Violette, a pretty, slender girl of eighteen, glides gracefully into the room. Violette wears tailored skirt of black, and white waist with sailor hat of latest design.

Violette—(Bright and smiling.) Oh! Jane, I came to tell you I am the happiest girl in the whole world. I am going to be married. (Jane places chair for Violette, who stands with hand on back of chair. Jane sits down.)

Jane—Did you come all the way to (name any town) to tell me that?

(Violette walks over and lays her hand on Jane's arm.)

Violette—Of course I did. I can hardly wait. Is'nt it grand? I am not going to marry for money or for a home, but for what makes both—love. Whatever it is, I want it. As young as I am I know that every woman's heart craves love.

Jane—(Scornfully.) My child, men call it admiration. (Jane points to chair. Violette

sits down. They sit near together.) Listen, Violette Glenn, you don't know it, but when you say "I do" your troubles just begin. Why do you do it! Why do you do it!

Violette—I love him so.

Jane—(Petulant.) Love! What do you know about love? I am not afraid to tell you face to face that you are a silly, foolish girl to leave a good home and a father and mother who just humor you to everything in reason and out of reason for a man who like as not will be sassin' you in less than a year. Men are grouchy as sin after the honeymoon is over. Show me! Show me the man that isn't!

Violette—Oh, Jane!

Jane—Marriage is a yoke, but some people act as if they thought it a joke! Where is the married couple that are not pullin' forty ways? It's just the same as havin' a mule and a balky horse hitched together. The mule stands on his head and the horse on his back legs

until the harness has all gone to smash, and you can't even find the hitchin' strap to tie them up with.

Violette — (Sincerely moved.) Jane you must be wrong! I cannot, cannot believe it!

Jane—Show me! Show me the two that go the same gait! One goes the New York City rapid transit gait and the other the Philadelphia funeral march. Things have come to a pretty pass now-a-days! Folks don't care when or where they may be goin', and don't think any more of breakin' marriage vows than they do china dishes.

Violette—You do talk the queerest! Why did you get married?

Jane—A man told me he loved me, and in a moment of weakness I believed him. Come to find out it was only himself he loved. (Jane rocks very fast.) You just be recollectin' one thing, a man can make a real live devil in your heart.

Violette—(Sweetly.) A man can make your heart beat as a drum in Paradise.

Jane—(Looking at her a moment. Orchestra plays "Dreaming.") Oh, dear me! Sweet dreams, dreams, dreams!

Violette—Didn't you have any honeymoon?

Jane — (Cynically.) Honeymoons are out of date. It's only the dollars that ring true—and keep ringin'. Nothin' like a honeymoon ever come my way — except I dreamed I had one once, and it lasted on and on until we were old, grey headed lovers. Show me! Show me the woman that has had dreams that have not turned out nightmares!

Violette—(Walking up and down) I don't care if I have nightmares enough to fill all the stables in this town. I won't be a m-i-s-e-r-a-b-l-e old maid — I just won't! I am going to have glorious, loving honeymoon days!

Jane — (Laughs. That's all right for dreamers, but a lovin' person bores a

practical man. He would find ditch-diggin' fascinatin' if he was comparin' the two. I have seen my man stand and look at the door and then at the window and look as if he was goin' to take his final run and jump, as I stood before him for my "habit" kiss. An over-dose of love is as indigestible as soft-shell crabs and buttermilk—only a fool woman don't know it.

Violette—(Pityingly.) Wasn't he kind to you?

Jane—(Dryly.) Well, if only seein' a person's faults and makin' them stay home all the time is kind, he was. My man said, "Be savin', be savin'! Count the pennies! Count the pennies! It costs money to go." I was so economical it gave me the headache. I hate bargain and sale! I hate it, I hate it to this day.

Violette — You made a mistake. What is a man for but to do — and be done by the woman he loves?

Jane — (Slaps her hands together in imitiation of her husband.) He said: "It's damn fool-

ishness! Damn foolishness! Do you want to break a man up with all these extras? The idea, flowers, books and theater tickets! You better be doin' something useful that amounts to something.

Violette—The law gets after the man that doesn't furnish his wife food for the body, but says nothing about her soul.

Jane—(Satirically.) Just imagine! Violette, the first night I was married my man said: "Jane, you set the alarm clock at 4 a. m. Put it in the dish pan, it will sound louder. We might over sleep. Those potatoes need plowin' mighty bad."

Violette—(Laughs.) Did you do it?

Jane—Of course I did! Business has put romance on the shelf. It's money, money, money, and work, work, work!

Violette — Do you know why? A woman's wants are many. I think the women tip the scales pretty even for the men.

Jane — You will have more spunk than most women or you will be lookin' as if you had heart disease in less than a year. Your Jack will dine, read the markets and base ball news, trim his corns and go to bed.

Violette — (Earnestly.) It's a woman's fault if she is not happy. If Jack enjoys base ball, markets and corns, I will too!

Jane—(Lays her hand on Violette's arm.) If nothing can change your determination just don't be forgettin' that the marriage certificate costs one dollar—be sure the man is worth a dollar: worth lovin' I mean.

Violette — Jack says he will always love and sympathize with me.

Jane—Sure that is the right dope for a woman, given in large doses. (With comic disgust.) Sympathy! Oh, dear me! Sympathy! Many a time when my nerves were a wreck and I wanted to be petted and coaxed up a bit my man

never seemed to see it, but said I had too many notions, I ought to get rid of notions. Did I know old Mrs. Black had the hypo. and White's old horse had the heaves? He would put in the rest of the evenin' kickin' about everything he set his eyes on—just for nothin' at all. If you are bound to marry buy a kickin' strap.

Violette—(Surprised.) A what?

Jane — (Spells very slowly.) K i c k i n' s-t-r-a-p. (Jane points one finger.) Show me! Show me the man that is not a born kicker.

Violette—What do you mean? (Jane walks to chair near table and picks up chair and bangs it down.)

Jane—(Raises her voice.) Naggin', naggin', naggin', scoldin' scoldin', scoldin'.

Violette—It's the women that don't know how to manage men.

Jane—(Snappily.) All I got to say is, I pity the women that take the contract. Trainin' a husband was not in my line.

My man scolds about his work all day and talks about pigs and chickens at night until in my dreams I can hear the pigs grunt and the old hens cackle. But worst of all he eats onions and drinks beer.

Violette — I can understand why a man would drink cocktails and mint juleps, but not beer.

Jane — (Shakes her head.) Good land! I thought he was my soul-mate. Violette Glenn, you take a few sniffs of that delightful odor on a man's breath and it may not change your love for him, but you will change your bed and room. Listen! My man goes to bed with his overalls on and a corn-cob pipe in his mouth; and the society man with a dress suit and a cigarette, but one man is just as big a fool as the other. If I make a fuss about it he says a poor, over-worked man can't have any pleasure, cries a few whisky tears and is snorin' in less than a minute. Men try to make slaves out of their wives, then set themselves up to

be just, but the whole bunch are frauds.

Violette — I don't believe it, and won't believe it!

Jane—Show me, show me the man that is just to his wife.

Violette — (Walking nervously about the room.) You are a man hater!

Jane — (Sitting beside kitchen table.) Good land! I have been too good to a man. There is a time to speak up, just as there is a time to keep still. I let the speakin' time slip, now I have to go stringin' off to prayer meetin' alone while he is bein' soused up and down in a Turkish bath house.

Violette—(Walks over and lays her hand on Jane's shoulder.) You frighten me!

Jane—(With Energy.) It's better to be scared before than after!

(Street piano or graphophone, off stage, at distance, plays "Goodbye, John." The piano comes nearer and stops under the window — Jane walks to window.)

Jane—Go! do you hear, go!

(Piano plays on. Jane throws potatoes at the window, hit or miss, one by one. Street piano with orchestra plays fast and furious. As each potato hits the man he howls, but stands his ground. When the potatoes are all gone, she looks around and sees the dipper in the bucket of water and begins throwing water. When it is all gone she turns the bucket upside down. Violette laughs merrily and runs to the window and throws him a piece of money. The man stops playing. Jane and Violette sit down. Jane fans herself with her apron. Looking away from Violette she makes comical faces and smiles at the audience. As she turns her face from the window the street piano man returns and shakes his fist before window, not showing his face. She turns suddenly and sees him.)

Jane — (Excited.) What shall I do? What shall I do?

(She takes a bunch of paper flowers and throws it out the window. The man waves them before the window. All is quiet for a minute.)

Jane — (Fanning and half laughing.) Men do beat—a-n-y-t-h-i-n-g.

(Street piano and orchestra play, "Kiss Me, Honey, Kiss Me." The street piano stops playing. Orchestra plays on. The man with the flowers passes and repasses the window. Jane throws a tin pan at him each time he passes. The last time he passes the flowers are pinned to his coat.)

Jane — (In loud voice.) Beat it! Beat it! Beat it!

(The man grabs the tin pans and beats them "to beat the band." He tries to keep time with orchestra

drum. Violette laughs. The man goes back to the street piano and plays for a few minutes in the distance. Jane sits on the table swinging her feet, showing her white stockings. She places her hands on her hips.)

Jane—Did you see me get the best of him? M-a-y-b-e, I allow my own man to torment me — but that's all. (Violette walks over and pull's Jane's dress down.) It's blamed little women know about men until they get them.

Violette — There are hundreds of happy marriages!

Jane — (Laughs scornfully.) A lot of make-believes! A woman is always hidin' her feelin's, and a man hasn't any to hide.

Violette — (Looking up.) Jack could never be cross to me! He is my ideal! I know it! (After a slight pause.) He is the biggest chance Iv'e had yet. Yes, I am his ideal.

Jane — (Sarcastically.) Ideal until he gets you! (Jane gets down from table.) Violette Glenn, you are not goin' into this

thing without your eyes open. I give you my word, a man is always blamin' his wife for all his troubles; and other women folks are helpin' him along until he is chuck full of self pity. Good lands! It's pretty bewilderin' to a woman the first time she hears her man damn and to hell things.

Violette—(Frightened.) Surely, Jane, a man would never swear before his wife!

(Both sit down in rockers. Violette puts her handkerchief to her eyes a moment. Jane lays her hands on Violette's knees.)

Jane—I believe you're cryin'! We women are sentimental fools! You just make up your mind to take things as they come along at home, but never let your man neglect you before folks, for it is an advertisement to other men to make love to you. There are plenty of men lookin' for the "soul-kiss" that have no souls.

Violette—(Rising) Listen! My husband shall never neglect me — I–will–see–that–he–does–not. I may break his

heart, but he shall never break mine.

Jane—Show me! Show me the man that don't neglect his wife. (Jane takes Violette by both hands and she sits down again.) Violette, when the neglectin' begins you just use good common sense and don't be clingin' to Jack, for the more you want his love the less you will get. Let me tell you another thing — don't be hangin' around him in business hours, makin' yourself a hindrance instead of a help. That will drive any man to drink, or something worse. Don't you forget it! A woman can ruin any man's business.

Violette—I just love to go to Jack's office!

Jane —(With biting satire.) I gave you credit for havin' better judgment. A man don't always want to be with the one that loves him — sometimes we women don't, either. Anything but havin' a man around under foot when you are cookin' a meal. Do you know how to cook?

Violette—(Shakes her head.) Not very much—but Jack does.

Jane—Learn it! Learn it or you will be on your road to Reno. (Orchestra plays, "I Am on My Way to Reno.")

Violette—Jack says he never cares what he has to eat.

Jane — (In a Loud Voice.) Show me! Show me the man that don't care what he has to eat!

Violette — (Rising.) Jane, you have been cruelly unjust to men in all that you have said. I don't care what happens, I am going to marry Jack, "Just because I love him so." (Orchestra plays softly, "Just Because I Love You.") I am going to take my chance.

Jane—(Rising.) Show me! Show me the girl that won't take a chance! (She turns to audienc.) I will show you the man that will take a chance. (Jane removes her wig. Orchestra plays, "There Will be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight.")

(The Curtain Falls.)

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